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EDITORIAL

At the dedication of the new auditorium of the Detroit Museum of Art, in June last, Prof. Edward S. Morse, of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, delivered an address, from which we quote as follows:

"If one should enter the house of a well-ordered family and find no books on the shelves, nor pictures on the walls, nor bric-a-brac gathered about, he would consider the family of low culture, and if deafening shouts and banging doors were the order of the day, he would regard the family as barbarous as well. Similarly, if one visits a city and finds no public library nor picture gallery, while tumultuous racket of preventable noises assails the ear, he will come to a similar conclusion.

"To the citizen the question naturally arises, of what practical use is a museum of art. Laying aside the profit of such a museum for the student, the artisan and the decorator, and the rational enjoyment it gives to thousands, it can be clearly demonstrated that a museum of art tends to the material gain of the community. The immediate gain comes from the throng of strangers who are drawn to the city by the attraction offered by such a museum.

"If the designers of your city were asked where they studied, where they derived their motives for form and decoration, their answers would probably be similar to the answers of fifty-four of the most prominent designers in Boston. They, with one exception, admitted that the Museum of Art had been a very great help to them and the one exception said that he had visited the Museum several times.

"The importance of museums of all kinds as part of the educational equipment of a community is being fully recognized. So important are provincial museums regarded in England as adjuncts to educational work that efforts are being made to secure an annual grant from the imperial government. Thomas Greenwood, of England, an eminent authority on the subject, expresses his belief that 'museums of the future must stand side by side with the library and the laboratory as part of the teaching equipment of the college and university, and in the great cities co-operate with the public library as one of the principal agencies for the enlightenment of the people.'

In many of our larger cities will be found more than one public museum, frequently several, which are supposed to occupy different fields in science and art. Sometimes the original purposes of these institutions are lost sight of and consequently they encroach upon each other's fields to the detriment of their individual and collective usefulness. Competition among museums in the same city is injurious, but, on the other hand, co-operation is absolutely necessary to reach the best results. If it were possible to combine under one roof all of the public museums in a municipality the best results would be obtained, but since, under existing conditions and conflicting interests, this consolidation is not practicable, the public would be best served if each museum were to adhere strictly to its legitimate field.

There are in this city, as in New York and other places, several museums, each of which is supposed to be confined to its particular field, yet at least four of these museums possess more or less valuable collections of musical instruments, two or more of them have installed collections pertaining to ethnology and archæology, while in other subjects there is more or less competition in the ground which is being covered. The aims and purposes of these various museums are entirely different. One is supposed to be devoted to the natural sciences; another to industrial art; a third to ethnology and a fourth to com-

mercial products, yet in all will be found certain groups of objects of a similar nature, and, in order to see them all, the greater part of a day must be consumed in passing from one museum to another.

Would it not be to the best interests of these museums, and of the museum-visiting public, if some mutually advantageous system of exchange or loan could be arranged, whereby all collections and objects in each special branch of art and science could be gathered together in that museum to which they would seem to properly belong? We believe this plan for placing the museums on the strongest and most logical basis is entirely feasible, and if it were put into operation the value of the collections, so consolidated, and the educational usefulness of these neighboring museums would be vastly increased.

. . .

The want of adequate funds from which the public museums of this country are suffering and the consequent inability of any one institution to employ competent experts in all branches of the fine and industrial arts is painfully apparent in the existing installation of certain of their collections. No single curator, be he ever so versatile and experienced, can hope to thoroughly master, within the limits of a lifetime, all departments of human achievement. An intimate knowledge of one or two special subjects, and a superficial acquaintance with the many others, is all that the most industrious student can expect to acquire. There is, however, in almost every public museum, at least one specialist who has, through the devotion of many years to a particular branch, become a recognized authority in his chosen field. Through his efforts a collection is gathered together which for comprehensiveness and accuracy of labeling far surpasses the similar collections of other museums, and through which his institution acquires a world-wide reputation. In certain other departments, however, the same museum will probably be found to be lamentably deficient, the collections being surprisingly meagre and inaccurately labeled. This is true of every museum in this country, as will be apparent to any intelligent visitor.

A partial remedy for this unsatisfactory condition of affairs could be provided if the directors of the various art museums would co-operate for their mutual benefit. By an interchange of courtesies one museum might arrange to send a specialist for a few days to a sister institution in another city to examine and correctly name the objects in a particular department, for instance, Oriental lacquers, in return for the reclassification of one of its own departments, such as classical antiquities. If this plan prove inexpedient, as consuming too much time, a mutual agreement, at least, could be entered into, whereby unrecognized specimens could be sent to specialists in the various museums for identification and attribution.

While the Pennsylvania Museum endeavors to cover the entire field of art

as thoroughly as its resources will permit, its ceramic collections are perhaps the strongest, having grown to such proportions that they now rank with the best and most representative collections, both from a historical and artistic standpoint, to be found on this side of the Atlantic. These collections include numerous groups of porcelains from China and Japan; English and Continental china, antique and modern, including classical pottery of Rome and Greece; pottery of the American Aborigines—Mexican, Peruvian, Mound Builders and Pueblo—and the only important and practically the only historically complete series of pottery and porcelain of the United States in existence.

For several years our Bureau of Identification has been furnishing information to collectors in all parts of the country, and all museums are cordially invited to submit for attribution, any uncertain specimens of pottery or porcelain which they may possess. This is at least a step toward the more extensive interchange of courtesies, as suggested above.



NOTES

Mr. August Gerber, of Cologne, Germany, recently paid the Museum a visit in reference to furnishing reproductions of statuary, bronzes, ivories and wood carvings of antiquity. Mr. Gerber has obtained a world-wide reputation through his artistic casts, which in texture and coloring are accurate copies of the originals.

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The collections of arms and armor and musical instruments have been entirely rearranged during the summer.

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The attendance at the Museum for three months was as follows:

June, 30,404.

July, 38,081.

August, 44,108.

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The Twenty-ninth Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art is ready. Copies may be had on application to the Curator of the Museum or the Principal of the School.

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Since the July number went to press, the following acquisitions have been received at the Museum:

Carved ivory fan, eighteenth century, Chinese, bequest of Miss Mary Clapier Coxé.